soprano line, is probably the most inspired of the set.

In such recent chamber music publications as Elliott Carter's *Pastoral* for piano and either viola, clarinet or English horn (New Music), Lukas Foss's *Early Song* and *Dedication* for violin and piano (Hargail) and Milhaud's *Bal Martiniquais* for two pianos (Delkas), there are refreshing qualities of distinction and invention. In the Milhaud I prefer *the Chanson Créole* to the *Biguine* . . . Villa-Lobos' *Fifth Bachianas Brasileiras* (Columbia, Bidu Sayao, soloist) becomes cloying after a rehearing. His *Seréstas* (Columbia, sung by Jennie Tourel) are more interesting, despite all their limitations as color music.

A thick piano score of Benjamin Britten's much discussed opera, *Peter Grimes* (Boosey and Hawkes), has arrived too near publication time for me to do justice to such a large-scale and ambitious undertaking. It seems to show some sense of theatre, but extended comment will have to await a later issue.

WITH THE DANCERS

By MINNA LEDERMAN

DARK MEADOW presents Martha Graham in a flood tide of energy. Her physical presence is unimpaired, her will absolute. Watching her we hear Chavez' strings and woodwinds as sounds far away, dissociated. The dance makes no concessions. It is large, tyrannical and uninhibited – arbitrary in the way it suggests what she has done before, provocative in the way that it is different.

It is different chiefly in the animation of her young people. *Dark Meadow* appears to be a fertility rite and like *Primitive Mysteries* and *El Penitente* evokes the American Indian. But now Graham's fancy spans the ocean and we are at the same time in Indonesia. The girls in flowery hair-dos and swathed skirts with bare midriffs are dainty and regal. Their handclaps beat out a sharp tattoo, they trip lightly in darting turns or, half-squat like idols, open and shut their bent knees and sweep their arms up in bird-like arcs. The young men court the girls, they rush them in flying lifts. And the girls look charming. Gone is the defiant forward thrust of the pelvis, the threatening heel-toe of Graham's early monolithic groups. The corps now is a living entity.

In this enlivened setting, Graham still moves alone, mysterious and withdrawn. Her aloneness is, in any work, exactly as in *Salem Shore,* the central drama. She has girl friends in *Appalachian Spring* and a matriarchal neighbor, and she gets married, but the climax is a long solitary dance of ecstasy. In physical contact with other dancers she is never arrogant, always benign. But her soloists tend in general to spin off in unrelated movements. Hawkins, the "one who summons" in *Dark Meadow,* is an isolated figure, stamping out a

frenzy peculiarly his own. Miss O'Connell, "of the earth," is forever obliquely on the march, sawing the air as she moves off-stage.

Withdrawn and aloof, Graham flings herself on inanimate props with a kind of throbbing fetichism. A wreath of thornwood frames her in *Salem Shore,* in *Letter to the World* she clings to the loveseat in the garden, in *Appalachian Spring* to the stylized chair. And she is literally torn from the shapeless Druidic rock of *Dark Meadow* to be absolved and dedicated.

But it is just this fevered soliloquy that grips her audience. Graham's audience, remarkably, is no longer cultist or provincial. Everybody comes, prepared for revelation by psychoanalysis, by the modern novel, and by surrealist painting. No one else in the theatre has Graham's impulse or power to expose inmost despair, to bewilder, embarrass, and bring to the surface hidden emotion. For this experience her audience is willing to discount the obscurities of her program notes, her long bodily struggles with remote obsessions. What it waits for is the projection of some intense image of human anxiety for which her special face and movements uniquely equip her.

In *Dark Meadow* Graham slowly drags herself along a formless grey length of stuff. She retreats, then starts over again. About to lose our attention she suddenly snaps it up and we see her all at once wrapped in this cloth, rocking back and forth in the unforgettable motions of an animal in pain or a creature in the dreadful condition of madness. We see her also lying on the ground moving her leg in a defunctionalized way as if it were an arm or the branch of a tree. She falls without tragic effect but, lying prone, gives us a sense of profound disorder. Rolling and tossing she burrows in the earth for the meaning of life. And when she lifts herself out of despair, in *Dark Meadow* or *Hérodiade,* it is without relief. She is simply answering the summons of fate, as after a long sleepless night of anguish one rises at daybreak.

It was a pleasure to relax in the New England garden of *Letter to the World.* When I saw it last, after two dark explorative works, it brought everyone up with loud cheers for the grasshopper leaps of Cunningham, for Graham's crimson dress and her final quiet repose.

III

Major events in the fall were revivals—Balanchine's *Barocco* (Bach's *Double Violin Concerto*) by the Monte Carlo, his *Apollo* and the Bolm-Chagall-Stravinsky *Firebird* by Ballet Theatre.

Chagall's décor is an Eighth Wonder. It drowns out the dancers and envelops the whole house. Not so clear in color as *Aleko* nor so wild in the fantasy of its costumes, it catches the shimmer of the beautiful score and extends it in a world of light. The music was heard better with Stravinsky himself late in January, but the effect at the Metropolitan was indescribable and a little terrifying also in the way it made one oblivious to the dancing. Markova wandering through the maze seemed a needless waste, all the sadder since she had such a poor season, giving us a cold *Swan* and *Aurora*

and a *Giselle* that was quite faint.

Without the Berman décor in which Kirstein presented *Barocco* early in 1941, the dancers' bodies lose a certain enlargement and weight. But seeing this work at the Monte Carlo with *Imperial, Gentilhomme* and *Concertantes* we have a clearer sense of Balanchine's present limpid and impersonal style. It is a style of which *Barocco* seems the purest expression. From the girls' first sideward lunge to the bounding pliés at the close, there is a drive, a repetition and expansion of figures which like the music creates an irresistible logic. In size the movements are the grandest possible as though Balanchine were showing us the nobility of elemental dance positions and how everything can evolve from them to the utmost limits. The wide lateral jetés, the great arm circles sometimes flowing sometimes sharp and cutting, the carriage of head and chest, are throughout magnificent.

Barocco has a unique architecture too which gives us the feeling of glittering stellar space. Partly the scale is fixed by the far apart placing of the girls, by their monumental groupings, two figures against six, four against four, by the opposition of the corps, standing or kneeling, contained in rigid quiet while the soloists wind in and out or plunge like meteors. There are broad echoing effects too, when one girl executes a great leaping turn and stops short while the other, facing her, repeats it immediately. Never has the silence of dancers been so eloquent. In *Barocco* stars appear to be falling, shouting, re-assembling all about us. At the last cadence the scattered girls are drawn together as if by centripetal force. Every detail in this ballet is beautiful in itself, miraculous in relation to the whole.

Apollo was given only three times. It is said to date, and perhaps it does. Nervous, exalted, elegant, it is the masterpiece of another time, another continent. Its consecrated subject, one of the formative myths of Mediterranean civilization, we see here profoundly revitalized by two exiles who lived in Paris in the great age between the wars.

Ballet Theatre's production with Eglevsky, Alonso, Kaye and Fallis was probably the finest we have had in America. Eglevsky with his sybilline twist of shoulders seemed to cast over everything an aura of godlike power, and the small, rounded Muses, so becoming to their Versailles headdresses, were amazing in the technical demands of their variations. Yet behind them, as if in a double image, one could still faintly see the figures of that other day, Lifar and the Paris ballerinas with their long attenuated limbs, the fine ankles and wrists, responsive as dancers in America never quite seem to be to the uneasy pulsations of Stravinsky's score.

Apollo has been reviewed in MODERN MUSIC many times since 1928. The ultimate appreciation, however, was printed in the *New York Herald Tribune* of October 23rd and 28th last year. If this superb work were never seen or heard again it would still live on in the columns Edwin Denby wrote for a daily newspaper.

III

New to the ballet world were five works American in choreography, music or design. Ballet Theatre gave us *Interplay, On Stage, Gift of the*

Magi and *Graziana,* and Monte Carlo the *Comedia Balletica.* All were minor in the degree of their intensity, and two or three suffered from an ill-advised press in which the artists themselves participated to prove that a ballet is good if it can't be recognized as one.

The most incisive talent belongs to Jerome Robbins whose *Interplay* is interesting as a ballet in its own right. His characters are Dead End Kids right off the sidewalks of New York and their hip and shoulder jerks give his dance idiom a harsh local inflection. But what Robbins does with them and their inhibited movements, the drive, flow and shifting momentum of his patterns is completely integrated. He seems also to be as close to Gould, the composer of this work, as he was to Bernstein in *Fancy Free.*

Much more pretentious was Michael Kidd's *On Stage.* It was also quite empty. After all, Tudor's savage *Gala Performance* spoofs ballet for style, which is a neater trick than going for the story. The best thing in *On Stage* proved to be Kaye's difficult turns on toe, with bent knee. The collaborating artists I found too modest. Dello Joio played his lyric talent down to a ruminative comment, sacrificing all for incidental effects, and Oliver Smith submerged himself in a discreet backdrop. (Smith deserves more gratitude this season as Ballet Theatre director for reviving *Apollo.*) On the other hand Lukas Foss's music for *Gift of the Magi* (fancy choreography by Semenov, gaslight décor by Raoul Pène du Bois) was over-ambitious, over-insistent. The mild O. Henry sentiment seemed to die away in clanging dissonances.

Uninterested in color, atmosphere, plot, interested only in dancing are John Taras and Todd Bolender, two obvious disciples of Balanchine. Bolender has the advantage of closer association with his master. The *Comedia Balletica* to *Pulcinella* (Stravinsky-Pergolesi) has a look of almost airy wit. It points up the dancers, Marie-Jeanne with her long slender feet, the opulent Ruthanna Boris, for brilliant individual effects. But Bolender shows as yet no grasp of the continuity that makes of a ballet a whole. When the *Comedia* is over we remember it in bits and pieces. Taras knows how to exploit the classical address of stars like Eglevsky and Alonso. His *Graziana,* to Mozart's *Violin Concerto in G Major* is a series of maneuvers in the naked academic style, open and clear but too bland in its note-for-note reliance on the music.

The Monte Carlo also revived *Faun* for Danelian, but like *Scheherezade* no one seems able to take that any longer.

III

Danilova's *Grand Adagio* (to Tchaikovsky entr'acte music) composed for her last year by Balanchine at the Monte Carlo, is an affecting vehicle. We see her winding and unwinding on toe across the stage, supported by Franklin in the half embrace of a waltz. One arm is raised as if to shield her face and with this gesture and the quiet perfection of all her turns and arabesques she gives us the experience of some tremulous and deep farewell. . . . Beautiful also was Balanchine's memorial sculpture of two kneeling girls, his setting of the

Stravinsky *Elegy* at the American Ballet School recital in Carnegie Hall. It was a strange, disturbing tableau, with the twined arms of the girls half-lifting them up, until the larger figure seemed to pounce down and devour the one below her. On the same program nothing could have been more gay than the *Circus Polka* with its masses of girls, all sizes, the smallest one wearing an elephant trunk. Quite without effort this scene took us directly to the heart of Midsummer Night's Dream.

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

THE concerto form, generally speaking, has more chance to make a successful radio impression than other large musical mediums whose focus is often on mass resonance rather than on detailed effects. Star soloists are genuinely concerned with perfection and demand adequate rehearsals and painstaking preparations to obtain balance over the microphone. Several recent broadcasts have included concertos and four of these works were contemporary.

Most important was Berg's *Violin Concerto,* beautifully performed by Szigeti and the N.B.C. Orchestra under Mitropoulos. There are sincerity and inspiration in every page of this deeply poetic work. Arty sophistries and smug clichés are utterly lacking and, though the piece is somewhat esoteric in a highly personal way, its distinctive lyricism and clarity nonetheless make it fully communicative. The elegiac sadness is expressed with materials that are striking enough to permit developments even exciting in their nature. Though never diatonic or modal, except at the introduction of the Bach chorale in the second part, the work is certainly tonal. The twelve-tone system is not a scale basis anyway, since tone rows are nearly always melodically disjunct rather than conjunct. This may not be our native tongue, but musical courtesy demands that we be on speaking terms with it.

In Vaughan Williams' *Oboe Concerto,* a C.B.S. presentation, the structural power transcends the special and limiting demands of particular thematic resources – which in this case are authentically British, of course, nationalist, but in the best sense of the word. The atavistic primitivism often heard in his symphonies and other more provincial pieces is avoided. The concerto is distinguished also for its orchestration and treatment of the solo instrument, though some of the scoring seemed a trifle thick for my taste.

Morton Gould's *Viola Concerto* was given its first performance by William Primrose and the N.B.C. Orchestra. By far the best of his attempts in a more-serious-than-jazz style, the work indicates a consciousness of the need to expand beyond the rigid little symmetries of 4-4 time and the thirty-two bar song pattern.